

EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE SAFETY

With age, some of these items become more sensitive to movement. Military explosives are designed to withstand long periods of storage under varied and often unfavorable conditions. Depending on climatic and soil conditions the ordnance may appear to be brand new or rusty and deteriorated. In either situation, these ordnance items can detonate if handled.

Historically, a 10% dud ratio was anticipated for explosive ordnance, which accounts for much of the unexploded ordnance at defense sites where training was conducted. Sites which were used as practice ranges for artillery are especially dangerous.

Training and practice ammunition can contain some type of spotting charge which simulates explosive impact. The spotting charge can vary from a few grains of black powder to several pounds of high explosives. NEVER assume that practice means inert. Even the least sensitive explosives may detonate if exposed to careless and improper handling.

The cardinal rule that is observed by professional ordnance response teams in any location or operation involving the potential for explosives or ammunition is to limit exposures to a minimum number of personnel, for a minimum amount of time, consistent with safe and efficient operation. Leave ordnance handling to the professionals.



An unfired projectile with cartridge case



Chemical filled land mine

If you locate anything that looks like it might be explosive ordnance or if you have a “war trophy” that you suspect might be live, report it to local law enforcement. They know how to contact the experts. Leave the explosive ordnance handling to the professionals. It takes trained experts to make assessments of these situations and to remove any explosive hazard.

For anyone else, the rules are:

- NEVER APPROACH a suspected explosive ordnance item.
- AVOID THE AREA where unexploded ordnance is located.
- NEVER ATTEMPT TO MOVE OR DISTURB explosive ordnance.
- NEVER ATTEMPT TO DISASSEMBLE any explosive ordnance item.
- NEVER TRANSMIT radio signals near explosive ordnance.
- REPORT ORDNANCE to authorities (law enforcement, fire department, etc.)



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Explosive Ordnance Safety

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Engineering & Support Center, Huntsville is currently the Ordnance and Explosives Center of Expertise (OE CX) and Design Center. In this capacity, it is committed to the safe management of all unexploded ordnance found at active installations or formerly used defense sites across the country. Especially important to this mission is ensuring public safety through education and awareness programs.

Explosive ordnance includes:

- Bombs
- Artillery projectiles, rockets, mortars
- Land mines and grenades
- Guided missiles
- Torpedoes and depth charges
- Flares and pyrotechnic devices
- Bulk explosives and propellants



Ordnance collected from a former firing range as "souvenirs".



M1 Anti-Tank Practice Mine

The key thing to remember when dealing with explosive ordnance, is that it was designed to destroy materiel and kill or maim people. Regardless of its age explosive ordnance retains its lethality.

Explosive ordnance may be found in virtually any location where defense activities have taken place. In fact, the majority of the explosive ordnance that has been found was manufactured between 1914-1953. Even the Civil War era ordnance being found can be just as deadly as it was the day it was manufactured.